

(3317)

INFORMATION

April 14, 1972

SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY KISSINGER

FROM: Fernando Rondon

SUBJECT: Assistant Secretary of State Newsom to Suggest Arms Limitation to Mobutu

President Mobutu of Zaire recently told our Ambassador that if Congo-Brazzaville received Chinese MIGs, as rumored, he would reluctantly have to acquire more advanced aircraft than the Macchi jets he now owns. To the Embassy's surprise, however, Mobutu seemed reluctant to spend more money on expensive new arms. As a result, Assistant Secretary Newsom intends to suggest the idea of a regional arms limitation agreement to Mobutu when the two meet next week in Kinshasa. (State's memorandum on this subject is at Tab I.)

Newsom will tell Mobutu that if Brazzaville receives MIG-17s, for instance, we would consider helping Mobutu purchase counterbalancing A-4Bs. But Newsom will also ask Mobutu whether an agreement to avoid combat jet aircraft by Francophone Africans, Brazzaville included, might not better serve both Mobutu's and the interests of the generally poor French-speaking states.

Both State and CIA believe Mobutu will be flattered by our approach to him. Neither are sanguine, however, that he will agree. I think it unlikely that Mobutu will long deny Zaire the more advanced jet aircraft that neighboring Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia have or will be acquiring. Secondly, I cannot imagine France showing restraint in the sale of arms (although State feels that France might do so in the case of the African countries that depend on it for economic assistance). In any case, some good and no harm will probably come from our approach so long as Mobutu knows that we are not trying to tell him what is best for Zaire. Newsom fully realizes this.

State Dept. review completed

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

Attachment:

Tab I - State memorandum (Elliot to Kissinger), April 13, 1972.

cc: Col. Kennedy

FERondon:mmm